UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-EIGHTH SESSION

Official Records

SECOND COMMITTEE
37th meeting
held on
Friday, 19 November 1993
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 37th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MONGBE (Benin)

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Distr. GENERAL
A/C.2/48/SR.37
28 January 1994
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

93-82570 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 91: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION (continued)

(e) ENVIRONMENT (continued) (A/48/25) (Supplement No. 25), A/48/451 and Corr.1; A/48/272-S/26108; A/48/552; A/C.2/48/2, A/C.2/48/6)

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(a) ELABORATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION IN THOSE COUNTRIES EXPERIENCING SERIOUS DROUGHT AND/OR DESERTIFICATION, PARTICULARLY IN AFRICA (continued) (A/48/226 and Add.1, A/48/564)

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(c) SUSTAINABLE USE AND CONSERVATION OF THE MARINE LIVING RESOURCES OF THE HIGH SEAS: UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON STRADDLING FISH STOCKS AND HIGHLY MIGRATORY FISH STOCKS (continued) (A/48/479)

1. Mrs. PIETIKÄINEN (Finland) said it was necessary to speed up the integration of the environment and development in order to implement the decisions of the Earth Summit. In the light of the expectations aroused by the Rio Conference, the results of the first High-level Meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development were encouraging, and its dynamic role should be promoted by the use of bold and innovative working methods to enable it to draw the necessary political conclusions. That goal might be furthered by the holding of informal gatherings between the ministers in order to focus on a few issues, among them the modification of patterns of production and consumption, and international trade, which would be taken up at the next session of the Commission.

2. The concepts of sustainable development and growth were sometimes confused. Sustainable development was a sustainable way of life, not exponential growth until world resources ran out. It should also be socially just and based on solidarity between generations. In the developed world growth meant continuation of the present destructive patterns of production and consumption. Sustainable development meant that those patterns would change. The next session of the Commission should encourage the exchange of experience and make those changes possible. It should also examine how international cooperation

(Mrs. Pietikäinen, Finland)

could encourage Governments to take further action such as the development of the economic instruments. International cooperation was needed because most Governments hesitated to take any measures in isolation out of fear that increasing the use of the economic instruments would endanger their national competitiveness on international markets. For that reason trade and the environment should be regarded as mutually supportive and interdependent. Common guidelines were just beginning to be developed for joint action in that area. Negotiating viable solutions for environment and trade within GATT should be initiated immediately after the Uruguay Round had been successfully concluded. It was timely and important for the Commission on Sustainable Development to consider that issue and give impetus to the process at its next meeting. For its part, Finland would actively promote international cooperation on integrating trade and environment.

3. She was glad that, after a year of negotiation, the process of restructuring the Global Environment Facility (GEF) was in its final stage. It should be given adequate resources so that it could carry out its work of assisting the protection of the global environment and the promotion of environmentally sound and sustainable economic development. Although the task had not been easy, the mandate provided by Agenda 21 was a correct one: ultimately every nation was responsible for its own natural resources and environment. A balance had to be struck between universal participation on one hand and effective decision-making and implementation on the other. It was of the utmost importance that the remaining open issues in the GEF negotiations should be resolved soon, as a positive outcome with respect to the GEF restructuring and replenishment would constitute a major achievement in international environmental cooperation and provide a solid financial base for the implementation of the conventions on climate change and the protection of biological diversity. At present, in view of the decreasing or stagnant aid flows at a time when needs were growing, all Governments were aware of the need to make the best use of the scarce resources available. For the industrialized countries, that required the careful definition of priorities as well as decisions on the most effective means for channelling resources; the choices were not markedly different even for the developing countries. The experience of GEF showed that it was possible to combine different and even conflicting perceptions into a functioning system. In that context, it must be borne in mind that many of the priority actions would not necessarily require additional funding: streamlined governance structures together with new working methods could already improve the machinery and make it more responsive to the needs of the countries to be served.

4. It was also necessary to strengthen the capacity of the operational activities system of the United Nations and give it the necessary efficiency to be able to compete for funds without giving up universal participation. It was to be hoped that that balance would be found and that the positive experience of the GEF negotiations would have a breakthrough effect on the process of reforming the Economic and Social Council.

5. She also expressed satisfaction that it had been agreed at the first High-level Meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development to accelerate

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the process of sustainable management of forests and prepare the ground for consideration of that subject by the Commission in 1995. Implementation of the Forests Principles was a demanding task which required close cooperation by all. Finland had been honoured to host the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe in June 1993, which had been an important step in promoting the Rio Forests Principles in Europe and developing practical criteria for sustainable forest management. It was to be hoped that effective preparations would be made for the discussion of the question, in close cooperation with relevant international organizations, particularly FAO, in the Commission in 1995. The follow-up to the Helsinki Conference would make an important contribution to those preparations. Finland continued to promote that process by arranging expert-level meetings.

6. She emphasized that the main responsibility for sustainable development remained at the national level. The Government of Finland had appointed a National Commission on Sustainable Development, chaired by the Prime Minister, whose functions were to coordinate and give advice in the implementation of sustainable development, particularly in sectors of particular importance for the country's economic development, such as energy, traffic, agriculture, forestry and trade.

7. Mr. ONGERI (Kenya) said that, despite the economic situation the country was going through, Kenya had embarked on measures to implement some of the objectives of Agenda 21 with the assistance of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and other United Nations organs. Recently, his Government had established a National Environment Action Programme to evolve ways of integrating environmental considerations into the national development programmes in all stages for all sectors of the economy. With the assistance of UNEP, the Government had embarked on a review of its environmental laws with a view to harmonizing them. It had also introduced environmental education in all schools and universities. It had undertaken measures to strengthen its institutional capability in the field of environment, and had established the National Biodiversity Unit, which had submitted a report to the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for a Convention on Biological Diversity.

8. After mentioning the many environmental conventions which Kenya had ratified or signed, he said that his Government welcomed the setting up of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) as one of the financial mechanisms through which additional costs of projects aimed at environmental conservation and sustainable development could be funded. Kenya was of the view that there was a linkage between desertification and poverty; there was a need to utilize the resources of GEF to fund desertification-related programmes and projects for effective implementation of Agenda 21. His delegation welcomed the establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) as the organ responsible for effective follow-up of the commitments and recommendations reached at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. His delegation noted with satisfaction that the General Assembly in its resolution 47/191, paragraph 32 (c), had decided that the Commission's secretariat would be

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located in New York, and that it would have a relevant office at Geneva and a liaison office at Nairobi. So far, the Nairobi office had not been established.

9. The Governing Council of UNEP at its seventeenth session had approved priority programmes targeted at integrating environment into development; that objective was an important element for achieving sustained growth and sustainable development of the developing countries. In that regard, it was to be hoped that sufficient financial and human resources would be assigned to UNEP to enable it to cope with its added responsibilities, bearing in mind that the strengthening of the regional offices of UNEP should not result in the weakening of its headquarters at Nairobi, a concern which had also been expressed in paragraph 38.23 of Agenda 21.

10. He was concerned that too many environment-related meetings were held outside UNEP headquarters at Nairobi. That trend kept the secretariat staff away from headquarters, at the expense of consultations and programme delivery. There was need, therefore, to rationalize the programming of meetings with a view to ensuring that as many of them as possible were held at headquarters, so as to minimize staff movements, to save on costs and to ensure maximum efficiency. He welcomed the recent affirmation by the Secretary-General, during his visit to Nairobi, that he would continue to strengthen the United Nations headquarters in Nairobi. As the host country, Kenya had continued to honour its obligations to the international community by giving maximum support to ensure that the secretariat and the Governing Council worked in a favourable environment.

11. His country had been honoured to host the first session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa. The session had provided an important forum for an initial exchange of information among Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and institutions. Although the negotiations had not been concluded, Kenya hoped that the proposed convention and its protocol on Africa would be finalized by June 1994 and that the General Assembly would approve the extension of the deadline to December 1994 to allow for incorporation of other regional protocols. His delegation also hoped that an early consensus would emerge on the financial mechanism and flow of resources to fund activities identified under the Convention. Emphasizing the expertise of UNEP in desertification issues, he said he believed that the close linkage between desertification, drought and environment more than justified the involvement of UNEP in the negotiating process.

12. Regarding the sustainable use and conservation of marine living resources of the high seas, he said that his delegation felt that the fisheries resources faced the danger of depletion unless measures were taken for their conservation and exploitation. To that end, the developing countries required appropriate technology and resources to complement their own efforts in conserving and exploiting their marine resources for the benefit of their people and in the spirit of chapter 17 of Agenda 21.

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13. With regard to human settlements, he recalled that the Commission on Human Settlements at its fourteenth session had discussed and recommended several resolutions and actions for the improvement of human settlements and sustainable development, including the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000, whose objective was to realize global affordable shelter for all groups in all types of settlements, including security of tenure, convenient access to employment and community services through the enabling approach. Kenya was committed to the implementation of the Global Strategy, and was already carrying out national programmes for that purpose. Measures that had been instituted included the revision of building by-laws and planning regulations in order to make shelter affordable to the majority of urban dwellers; support for local building material research and promotion of indigenous low-cost building materials; involvement of the private sector, non-governmental organizations, local authorities and community-based organizations in the formulation of housing policies and programmes. Kenya was also developing a computerized database to be used in monitoring the performance of the shelter sector. The City Data Programme constituted a significant step in the establishment of the necessary national institutional and technical capacities required for the success of the Global Strategy. Kenya, as a member of the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee, was participating actively in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 47/180, which provided for convening in Istanbul, in 1996, the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), whose main objective was to formulate a global plan of action to address the issue of the worsening living conditions of a vast segment of the world population.

14. There existed a regrettable tendency to consider that human settlements problems were confined to the developing world. The fact was that homelessness and the need for decent shelter was a problem affecting developed and developing countries alike. The inner-city problems in the industrialized world, the slums in many developing countries and the scores of homeless people in the major cities of the world were examples of the type of human settlements and poverty problems that should be addressed. He therefore urged the international community to approach Habitat II with the unity of purpose that it deserved, in order to effectively address that global crisis. As a member of the Bureau, he wished to specifically acknowledge the efforts of the Habitat II secretariat to involve the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in the preparatory activities for the Conference. In that connection, African Member States were hopeful that the Habitat II secretariat would be able to organize a regional preparatory meeting before the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee. The proposed programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995 stated that adequate resources would be allocated for the realization of the objectives of Habitat II and that the preparatory work already under way would continue during the 1994-1995 biennium. Such preparatory activities called for considerable funding and good will, without which the success of the Conference could be jeopardized.

15. With respect to the role and the place of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) in the United Nations system, he said that it had been established in 1976 as a separate body from UNEP to deal specifically with the problem of human settlements. The need to address that problem was even

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greater than it had been in 1976, as evidenced by the adoption of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000, the inclusion of the question in chapter 7 of Agenda 21 and the convening of the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II). Agenda 21 called for the strengthening of the role of the major groups involved in its implementation; in that regard, Kenya considered that Habitat was the relevant global focal point for implementing the programmes of Agenda 21 in the area of human settlements utilizing the expertise acquired over the years. The General Assembly in its resolution 47/212 B of 6 May 1993 had asked the Secretary-General to reconsider his decision to abolish the post of Executive Director of Habitat. Kenya was of the view that Habitat and UNEP had two distinct mandates which should not be merged in terms of management or programme delivery. Adding the work of Habitat to that of UNEP would create serious conflict in terms of personnel, time allocation and programme delivery, to the detriment of either centre's ability to fulfil its mandate.

16. Mr. NYAMBI (United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO)), speaking on agenda item 91 (f), said that UNSO had continued to provide assistance to countries through its support to strategic framework processes for the planning and implementation of activities related to the management of natural resources, operational field activities, dissemination of information and awareness building, and support to subregional organizations. In addition, since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), and in keeping with chapter 12 of Agenda 21, support to activities on environment information systems had been intensified, and a new impetus had been given to increased harmonization of efforts among donors in connection with national plans of action for combating desertification. Another area which had received attention was the problem of recurrent drought, which had caused serious damage in recent times. In that regard, it had been decided during 1993 to develop a programme on strengthening drought preparedness and mitigation for the Sudano-Sahelian countries. Countries were being assisted in developing policy frameworks for effective management of drought, strengthening institutional mechanisms and initiating capacity-building at national and local levels, and developing and testing flexible response options to protect livelihood systems at the local level.

17. In spite of renewed attention to the problem, the expectations generated at the Rio Conference and the interest of Governments in elaborating an international convention on desertification, resources allocated to combating desertification had continued to decrease over the last few years. On the one hand, work must be pursued on elaboration of the international convention and, on the other, it was important that funding should be made available for implementation of the six programme areas of chapter 12 of Agenda 21. To be an effective and operational instrument, the convention on desertification should foster greater national, regional and international commitment, actions and cooperation. To contribute to solving the problem of land degradation in the dry lands, the convention must place greater emphasis on protecting and improving the livelihoods of inhabitants in areas prone to drought and desertification. Such a livelihood-centred approach would provide one of the principal means of breaking the nexus between poverty and land degradation.

(Mr. Nyambi, UNSO)

18. In view of those concerns, UNSO and UNDP had continued to provide support to further the work of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa, by providing information to and supporting the participation of the national focal points in the 22 Sudano-Sahelian countries, providing technical and substantive support to the African countries in connection with their participation in the process, and providing assistance to the secretariat of the Committee. In connection with that support, he wished to recall the relevant General Assembly resolutions inviting countries to contribute resources to enable UNSO to provide assistance to the most affected countries for the negotiating process. He also wished to express gratitude to Sweden, Norway and Denmark for their contributions through UNSO for that purpose.

19. The Governing Councils of UNEP and UNDP had reaffirmed the need to continue with the joint venture arrangement to support UNSO in connection with the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification in the Sudano-Sahelian Region, which had proved to be an effective mechanism for strengthening collaboration between the two organizations on actions to combat desertification. Consultations were now going on to see how the joint venture mechanism could be broadened to allow for participation of donors and other organizations. Because of the multisectoral nature of the fight against drought and desertification, UNSO was happy that the new Administrator of UNDP had assigned high priority to the question of desertification, and had initiated a process for the preparation of an overall strategy to ensure that the UNDP system would be able to respond more effectively to the challenges posed to sustainable human development by the problem of desertification.

20. Mr. OZOLINS (World Health Organization) said that in the time which had elapsed since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), the World Health Organization (WHO) had taken various steps to see that its programmes were responsive to the resolutions adopted at Rio and to Agenda 21. A new global strategy for health and environment had been formulated which established 12 organization-wide objectives and identified actions to achieve them through programmes for the promotion of environmental health and chemical safety and broader action and collaboration. WHO was preparing a detailed plan of action for the implementation of the strategy. Special emphasis would be placed on urban areas, where population and environmental problems were increasing, as well as on global health and environmental issues.

21. Because health and environment issues concerned everyone, there was a crucial need to obtain new partnerships and alliances with other socio-economic sectors in implementing the strategy. WHO, in cooperation with the UNDP Capacity 21 programme, had initiated work in some 10 countries in all WHO regions to support the work done by the Governments to ensure that health and environment considerations were incorporated into national plans for sustainable development. WHO was also developing guideline manuals for Governments on how to incorporate health protection and promotion measures into the development of policies and plans for the various sectors.

(Mr. Ozolins, WHO)

22. As part of the International Programme on Chemical Safety (IPCS) of WHO, ILO and UNEP, the objectives of which had been broadened in order to respond to the requests addressed by the Rio Conference, concrete steps had been taken in relation to decisions on environmentally sound management of toxic chemicals contained in chapter 19 of Agenda 21. It was expected that in 1994 the International Programme on Chemical Safety would have a stronger and wider base of support, inasmuch as organizations such as the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) had expressed their intention of joining IPCS as cooperating organizations. Preparations were also well under way for convening an Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Risk Assessment and Management, which was scheduled for April 1994 in Stockholm. Governments would be invited to examine proposed terms of reference and operating procedures for an intergovernmental mechanism on chemical risk assessment and management, as well as to give policy guidance on achieving specific objectives called for in the implementation of the six programme areas outlined in chapter 19 of Agenda 21. While WHO would make every effort to accommodate needed programme changes in connection with health issues in line with Agenda 21 within the existing resources, it was clear that without new partnerships and resources, it would be very difficult to accomplish that task.

23. Mr. NEBIE (Burkina Faso) praised the work carried out by the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session, at which it had adopted a number of resolutions dealing with activities to follow up UNCED, pursuant to which the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa and the Preparatory Committee for the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States had been established and the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks had been convened. Furthermore, substantial progress had been made within the Secretariat, and the restructuring of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) was continuing. Nevertheless, the discussions under way at the current session prompted concern, as did the outcome of certain meetings.

24. With regard to the international convention to combat desertification, he reaffirmed the necessity of adopting a practical, action-oriented instrument, and earnestly hoped that the convention and the annex concerning Africa could be finalized by June 1994. As to the financing of projects to be implemented under programmes established pursuant to the convention, given its new structure, GEF would be one of the financial institutions most ideally suited to provide funds, and he endorsed the idea of allocating GEF resources for that purpose. With regard to the Commission on Sustainable Development, all delegations had recognized that few of the pledges made at UNCED had been translated into contributions. Agenda 21 could be successfully implemented in the developing countries only if sufficient additional resources were available, human resource development was promoted and transfers of technology and know-how proceeded on favourable terms.

25. Ms. TOMKINSON (Australia) said that the success of the Commission on Sustainable Development was of the utmost importance. It was necessary to ensure that the United Nations system implemented Agenda 21 in a coordinated, outcome-oriented and cost-effective manner and to encourage Governments and intergovernmental organizations to implement the programmes adopted following the Rio Conference. Her country attached high priority to the Commission's review of national action on Agenda 21. Accordingly, national reporting should be encouraged, in order to obtain information on successful models for national progress and identify obstacles to progress. Her country was preparing its first national report to the Commission. That was a difficult task, which required consideration of a complex set of environmental, economic and social issues in an integrated manner and in accordance with a challenging set of guidelines. That complexity might prove discouraging, and priority therefore should be given to considering ways to simplify the guidelines for the voluntary preparation of reports.

26. Her delegation looked forward to the outcome of the work of the three panels of the High-level Advisory Board on Sustainable Development and commended the work of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development relating to the follow-up to Agenda 21. With regard to the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, her delegation supported the proposal for a resumed session of the Preparatory Committee to address outstanding issues, in view of the importance of the Conference for the entire international community.

27. Her country was participating actively in the work of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on a convention to combat desertification and believed that the convention should address the underlying causes of the phenomenon, including human behaviour and environmental and socio-economic factors such as the adverse impacts of trade distortions. At the second session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, her delegation had joined in the adoption by consensus of a draft resolution extending the mandate of the Committee until January 1995, on the clear understanding that it in no way prejudged the content of the convention itself, which would be determined during the sessions of the Committee. It also welcomed the report on the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification and urged all agencies involved in its implementation to ensure that future work was consistent with the convention on the subject.

28. With regard to unregulated high seas fishing and irresponsible fishing practices on the high seas, which posed serious problems for countries whose economies depended on living marine resources, particularly the countries in the Pacific region, her delegation strongly supported the work of the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks. It also endorsed the recommendation of the Conference calling on the General Assembly to convene two further sessions of the Conference in March and August 1994. Furthermore, her country remained firmly opposed to large-scale drift-net fishing on the high seas, believed that it should be replaced with selective and responsible fishing methods and remained concerned at the fact that, the provisions of General Assembly resolution 46/215 notwithstanding, the practice was continuing in some areas, particularly in the Mediterranean. The General

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Assembly should request the Secretary-General to submit a further report to it at its next session on the implementation of resolution 46/215 and seek detailed information from relevant nations on the effectiveness of measures they had employed to that end.

29. Her country was pleased that the forty-seventh session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) had reiterated the role of UNEP as the primary environment agency of the United Nations and that progress had been made in determining priorities in the light of Agenda 21. It was essential that UNEP develop a coherent mandate for its regional offices and cooperate with other international and regional bodies to avoid duplication of work.

30. Mr. ABDELLAH (Tunisia), speaking also on behalf of the other States members of the Arab Maghreb Union, namely, Algeria, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mauritania and Morocco, emphasized the critical importance which those countries attached to questions relating to the environment and development and to international cooperation in that field, since they were affected by many environmental problems, including desertification and the pollution of their northern coasts by industrial wastes originating in industrialized countries. Accordingly, they had adopted concerted national and regional policies to protect their environment. The measures they had adopted included the following: the elaboration of a strategy to combat desertification and the establishment of an African data monitoring and exchange network on desertification and soil erosion; assessments of the state of the environment; a drinking water supply plan; the proclamation of June 17 as Maghreb Environment Day and the adoption of the Maghreb Environment Charter.

31. Inasmuch as desertification and drought were global problems, as were global warming and the depletion of the ozone layer, the international convention to combat desertification should generate as much interest as other environmental instruments. Accordingly, the industrialized countries should review the position they had adopted at the second session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, particularly with regard to financial resources. An increase in resources for the convention would prevent it from encountering the same difficulties that had affected the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification adopted at Nairobi in 1977. The countries of the Arab Maghreb Union also reaffirmed their support for strict compliance with the mandate entrusted to the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee in General Assembly resolution 47/188. It therefore was essential to proceed in accordance with chapter 12 of Agenda 21 and negotiate a regional legal instrument that would be annexed to the convention and form an integral part thereof.

32. With respect to climate change, the countries of the Arab Maghreb Union felt that the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to prepare a general convention on climate change should limit itself to organizing the first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and refrain from taking decisions on its behalf. They also felt that the principle of the joint but different responsibility of States should be

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fully respected and that the developed countries had a special responsibility in combating the adverse effects of climate change. The fact that there was no methodology for preparing a list of all the gases causing the greenhouse effect should not prevent the industrialized countries from submitting an exhaustive list of those gases at the first session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention. That was why it was necessary to adopt specific methodologies for the developing countries which would take their level of economic development fully into account. The concerted implementation of the obligations assumed by the Parties to the Convention should be governed chiefly by the provisions of article 4, paragraphs 2 (a) and (d), which for the present limited it to the industrialized countries.

33. With regard to fishing and marine contamination, the countries of the Arab Maghreb Union were convinced that the progress achieved in the Mediterranean in the framework of the Barcelona Convention was a useful basis for cooperation and would try to make it permanent in order to guarantee the ecological balance of that semi-enclosed sea. They also recognized the commitments with regard to the Mediterranean assumed in Nicosia and confirmed in Cairo.

34. The States of the Arab Maghreb Union supported the measures provided for in the Convention on Biological Diversity and considered that the preparation of a plan for safeguarding biological diversity would make it possible for that region to preserve its riches and continue to play its historic role as a bridge between North and South. The programme should include the participation of the centres for specialized activities of the Plan of Action for the Mediterranean and have the support of the Parties to the Barcelona Convention.

35. With regard to the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, the countries of the Arab Maghreb Union proposed the following: a broad regional attack on those questions based on the strengthening of the regional and subregional fishing organizations; the provision of assistance to the developing countries to strengthen their capacity to supervise, manage and conserve fish resources and stocks and support of the final document of that Conference, which should take into account all those factors and the peculiarities of each region. In that context, the continuation of large-scale drift-net fishing, a practice which should be prohibited pursuant to the resolutions on the subject adopted by the General Assembly, was cause for concern.

36. With respect to mine clearing in zones of armed conflict, he drew attention to the urgent need to resolve that problem, which was hindering the development of the regions in which minefields existed.

37. Because of their geographical location, the countries of the Arab Maghreb Union were exposed to invasion by the desert locust. In that connection, he recalled the decisions taken by the Ministers of Agriculture of the countries of the Arab Maghreb Union and the Sahel in the meeting held at Algiers on 27 September 1993, in which they had appealed to the international community to implement the emergency plan worked out by the experts of the region (A/C.2/48/6). He also recalled the draft resolution on the subject submitted by

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the Group of African States and expressed the hope of the Arab Maghreb Union that help would be forthcoming from the international community at the pledging conference to be held under FAO auspices in the first quarter of 1994.

38. It was necessary to provide the developing countries with additional financial resources through the transfer of economically sound technologies and the strengthening of their national capacities. A first step in that direction would be the establishment at the regional level of international eco-technological centres which would assist in the provision, transfer and use in those countries of the needed technologies and related capacities.

39. Mrs. MAIKARFI (Niger) said that her country, which was situated at the centre of the Sahel, was suffering the adverse effects of environmental degradation, as a result of which 87 per cent of the population had been deprived of its chief means of production because of soil erosion. Consequently, environmental questions were of central importance to the process of Niger's development. After listing the various international instruments relating to the environment to which Niger was a party, she expressed satisfaction that an international convention to combat desertification in the countries experiencing serious drought or desertification was being elaborated, a process in which Niger was participating actively.

40. Her delegation wished to express its gratitude to UNSO for the intensity with which, in accordance with the recommendations of UNCED and on the basis of its broad experience, it was carrying out its work of helping the countries of the Sudano-Sahel region in their strategies for combating desertification, focusing its projects and programmes on the integrated management of natural resources, the development of pastoral activities, land use and education and awareness-building. Unfortunately, since 1992 the donor countries had reduced their contributions, which diminished the effectiveness of its work. It was therefore to be hoped that those countries would change their attitude and provide the Office with resources adequate to enable it to implement the recommendation made at the Rio Conference that its financial and human resources should be increased and its mandate broadened. To that end, she expressed the hope that the consultations begun by the office with a view to making use of new financing machinery like the World Environment Fund (WEF) would be successful.

41. Mr. KALPAGE (Sri Lanka) said that the report of the UNEP Governing Council at its seventeenth session demonstrated the magnitude of its task with regard to the follow-up action to UNCED. The contributions of UNEP would be essential in the implementation of Agenda 21, the two conventions on climate change and biodiversity and in the elaboration and implementation of international conventions and agreements on desertification, sustainable development of small island developing States and the management of straddling and highly migratory fish stocks. His delegation appreciated the efforts made by UNEP in promoting international cooperation in the area of environment and in assisting developing countries to build their capacity to handle environmental concerns. It was to be hoped that the Executive Director of UNEP would be able to devote her entire attention to the tasks before UNEP.

(Mr. Kalpage, Sri Lanka)

42. With regard to human settlements, which were among the first priorities in the development agenda of developing and developed countries, he said that adequate housing was a stabilizing factor for society and encouraged the sense of community which was vital in the pursuit of development. Housing was the basic foundation on which development goals in many sectors could be structured and could serve to integrate programmes directed towards the solution of the problems of poverty, unemployment, urban migration, social crimes and environmental degradation. Realizing the vital importance of housing in addressing those development issues and in building a socially stable and secure society, the Government of Sri Lanka had given priority to human settlements in its development programmes and would continue to do so until it reached the goal of shelter for all.

43. Human settlements had profound implications for the broader questions of development, peace and security, and it was important to address human settlement issues at the international, regional and national levels. Those issues had for too long received less international attention than they deserved, in spite of the fact that the overall outlook for shelter world wide was bleak: widespread civil conflicts and wars and natural disasters had completely destroyed many cities and villages in various parts of the world and had left a large number of refugees and displaced persons homeless.

44. The Commission on Human Settlements and its secretariat, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) had been established under General Assembly resolution 32/162 to serve as a focal point for human settlements action and the coordination of activities within the United Nations system. In its resolution 14/19, the Commission emphasized and confirmed that the Centre had an important role to play in the execution of important actions within the United Nations system. The Centre should contribute to the preparations of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) in 1996, the implementation of the relevant provisions of Agenda 21, the mobilization of international support for ensuring shelter for all, and the coordination of strategies and development projects. There was much more to be achieved in the implementation of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000 and, although the main responsibility in that area resided with Member States, the Centre had a crucial role to play in supporting national Governments in their efforts to become effective facilitators in the field of housing. The Centre helped Member States to prepare national shelter strategies and build national capabilities to implement such strategies through institution-building, the dissemination of information and the establishment of databases to monitor progress in shelter programmes and training of personnel. In addition, the Centre provided special advisory services and carried out regional activities for evaluating and developing new approaches for the provision of shelter. Technical assistance was provided by the Centre for research to identify realistic solutions in such areas as housing finance, building materials and technology, land reclamation and urban development. All of those activities were of immense value to developing countries, and the role of Habitat in that respect was equivalent to the role of UNEP in the field of environment.

(Mr. Kalpage, Sri Lanka)

45. At its fourteenth session, the Commission on Human Settlements had expressed the view that its institutional capabilities should be substantially strengthened. To that end, it had recommended that UNEP and Habitat should "be kept under distinct senior management in accordance with the specific nature and activities of the two bodies". That recommendation had been supported by the Chairman of the Group of 77 in his statement on behalf of the Group, which Sri Lanka fully endorsed. Any savings resulting from the abolition of the post of Executive Director of Habitat would not compensate for the obvious set-back that such a move would entail in terms of shelter programme implementation and the preparatory work for Habitat II. Inter-agency coordination was undoubtedly needed but not at the expense of effective implementation of plans and projects. Coordination was necessary not only between UNEP and Habitat but should also include UNDP, since the three agencies carried out joint projects. The challenge facing the international community in the area of human settlements necessitated and justified the immediate appointment of an Executive Director of Habitat. The early appointment of an Executive Director would be in accordance with General Assembly resolution 32/162 and would enable Habitat to respond to the needs of developing countries in their efforts to implement the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000 and contribute to preparations for Habitat II. His delegation therefore urged the Secretary-General to fill the post of Executive Director of Habitat as soon as possible in order to ensure that the Centre remained under senior management.

46. Mr. CENCEN (Slovenia) said that the transition to a parliamentary democracy and market economy made it necessary for new democracies to carry out a thorough reform of their legislation on environmental protection. That would be in keeping with the double objective of coordinating their new environmental legislation with that of countries with high standards in that area, and encouraging the environmentally sound restructuring of technologically outmoded and crisis-ridden economies. However, both global development and the development of individual countries no longer depended on economic efficiency alone but must also uphold the principle of sustainable development, the need for which was becoming increasingly evident. One of the implications of that approach was that the transfer of pollutant technologies from developed countries to less developed parts of the world should be halted since, far from resolving the problem of environmental pollution in general, that practice only dispatched the problem from one place to another. Development aid should therefore introduce technologies that would not damage the environment of recipient countries.

47. The competitiveness of the Slovenian economy would be protected by the ban on the import of polluting technologies, taking into account the fact that environmental problems could not be resolved through trade restrictions but rather through appropriate macroeconomic and environmental policies. Slovenia wanted its environmental legislation to be in keeping with the documents of the Rio Conference, in particular Agenda 21. During the current year, Slovenia had adopted the Environmental Protection Act and the Public Trading Services Act, which had established a system for exploiting natural goods and resources under environmentally sensitive conditions and respecting the "polluter pays" principle. In addition, Slovenia was seeking to cooperate with non-governmental

(Mr. Cencen, Slovenia)

organizations and the public with a view to implementing the decisions of the Rio Conference.

48. The problem of environmental degradation and destruction was a problem that affected all mankind. It could not be solved through legislative reforms and national technological innovations but required, first of all, major structural changes in international law, economy and ethics. Modern legislation should be based on the principle of cooperation and responsibility, but not even that was enough. The environment could not be protected merely by prohibitions and compulsory measures but required a social consensus on environmental protection reached by the mechanisms of stimulation and motivation within the economic and social system. Furthermore, an efficient system of environmental protection was impossible without high-quality data on the state of the environment. Research, data collection and environmental protection programming and planning were essential. It was also important to strike a balance between the State system of monitoring and controlling natural phenomena and similar activities carried out by local communities. That would be particularly difficult for some countries that were major polluters because of their critical economic situation and environmental conditions inherited from the past.

49. Of course, privatization could be an important step towards sound environmental management, provided that it took place within an appropriately developed normative framework, and that, as had already been mentioned, it was accompanied by both prohibitions and incentives. Although Slovenia was already headed in that direction, it still needed international financial assistance in the environmental field for the following reasons: the national capital market could not provide sufficient resources for investment in business or environmental restructuring; it was easy to steer the process of restructuring the economy in an environmentally sound direction by applying financial criteria and incentives, whereas waiting for the economy to reactivate itself could create greater environmental problems; in addition to financing, appropriate technological know-how and management practices must be transferred to recipient organizations, as innovative financing was the most rapid means of introducing innovative policies and practices.

50. While each country had its specific natural, economic and social conditions and each should therefore establish its own objective for environmentally sound development, it was clear that the United Nations, through the relevant institutions, was the most appropriate forum for putting forward suggestions and proposing solutions of general interest and also for the exchange of experiences. Determined efforts must therefore be made in order to ensure an appropriate division of labour within the United Nations system. The document resulting from such efforts could be submitted to the Commission on Sustainable Development for its consideration and subsequently to the Economic and Social Council for approval.

51. Mr. ELIASHIV (Israel) said that it had been Israel's view for many years that the gap in standards of living and capacities between rich and poor countries was an even greater threat to universal peace than that created by the admitted neglect of the environment. In that context, Agenda 21 opened new

(Mr. Eliashiv, Israel)

vistas for attaining sustainable development and it was vital to build on the momentum of cooperation in the field of environment and sustainable development in order to create a sense of partnership for the future. That depended largely on the Commission on Sustainable Development as the primary forum for international cooperation and action. Indeed, the first session of the Commission had emphasized the political importance of effective follow-up to the Rio Conference and reaffirmed national responsibilities concerning sustainable development and the commitment to implementing Agenda 21.

52. Israel was particularly sensitive to the fragility of the environment and development because its rebirth had been the result of a constant effort to rehabilitate degraded land. While nearly every problem had a technological or scientific solution, provided that there was a will to solve it and the necessary financial means were available, those solutions were viable only if they were designed and implemented on a global scale. While everyone could learn from the mistakes and emulate the successes of others, nothing was more urgent than the establishment of a programme for the compilation and dissemination of information on the environment and for environmental monitoring under international auspices. While general policies must be dealt with on a global level, special importance should be attributed to regional cooperation in solving problems of common interest. The Mediterranean Action Plan, in which Israel actively participated and most of whose achievements would not have been possible on a purely national basis, could serve as a good example. Israel therefore welcomed the fact that, at its first session, the Commission on Sustainable Development had emphasized the importance of the transfer and environmentally sound application of technology with a view to enhancing the scientific and technological capacity of developing countries to achieve sustainable development. Technology was a key element in sustainable development and should be carefully selected so that it could be adapted to the specific needs of each developing country.

53. The research conducted in Israel was adapted to the specific requirements of the region and was linked to Israel's very considerable expertise in the use of water resources, the desalination of sea water and the purification of brackish water in the desert. All that research and development activity, which represented the highest degree of water control in the world, was aimed at turning arid deserts into fertile land. Desertification adversely affected the lives and well-being of 2.7 billion people. Those who were concerned about environmental issues must therefore redouble their efforts to bring it under control. The Middle East possessed vast desert lands but meagre water resources. However, the desert could be turned into fertile land if the necessary experience and technology were available. The National Desert Research Institute at Ben Gurion University in Israel was engaged in arid zone research and development, and, in particular, the conversion of the desert into a productive environment. The scope of the Institute's activities transcended Israel's borders and its research had world-wide significance. Israel therefore invited all countries, particularly its neighbours in the Middle East, to join it in its research and development venture and share its experience in order to find practical solutions to desertification.

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54. Adequate funding mechanisms were also essential for environmental protection. It was to be hoped that the World Bank, the regional development banks and other international institutions, which had achieved laudable success in promoting the development of agriculture, industry, education, health and social welfare in many developing countries, could contribute to fostering environmentally sound development. The capacity of the Global Environment Facility to finance environmental programmes of concern to all nations must be strengthened. No less important was the role of UNDP, UNEP and other organizations of the United Nations within the framework of the follow-up to the Rio Conference and the forthcoming International Conference on Population and Development, to be held in Cairo, the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small-Island Developing States, an international convention to combat desertification and other follow-up activities of the Rio Conference.

55. While nations built an environmental management infrastructure, international organizations should play a transitional role in the developing world. Non-governmental environmental organizations also deserved the support of the international community. The Commission on Sustainable Development, for its part, should provide an appropriate intergovernmental forum for the exchange of information on national and multilateral experiences. An effort must therefore be made to ensure that it was an efficient and effective body, that it promoted genuine international cooperation and that it represented the interests of all nations.

56. Regional cooperation was an essential element for the implementation of environmental action. In that conviction, during the recent multilateral talks held in the framework of the Middle East peace process, Israel had presented detailed and concrete proposals on projects for arid zone agricultural development, the establishment of a centre for combating desertification, the development of alternative energy sources, desalination technology and environmental protection. At the recent plenary meeting of the Working Group on the Environment, held in Cairo, an Israeli proposal to declare 1994 the Year of the Environment in the Middle East had been adopted. Those projects were intended not only to foster cooperation but also to build confidence and achieve peace. It was Israel's desire that that peace should embrace all neighbouring countries so that they could live together in an atmosphere of equality, trust and mutual respect and devote their concerted efforts, resources and energies to social and economic development through genuine cooperation.

57. Mr. CAMARA (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)) said that, in most cases, the underlying causes of desertification were poverty and the lack of human, technological, institutional and financial resources. Population pressures and the consequent mismanagement of natural resources were causing the degradation of the fragile ecosystems of arid, semi-arid and sub-humid areas and setting in motion a process of desertification that, in many cases, was irreversible, and that was not merely an environmental problem but primarily one of development. For that reason, any measure designed to combat desertification should focus on its fundamental causes: poverty and underdevelopment. Action by FAO to combat desertification should be accompanied by measures to promote integrated rural development, in conjunction with the

(Mr. Camara, FAO)

elimination of other causes and manifestations of poverty and underdevelopment. Such action should not be divorced from other measures necessary for the attainment of sustainable development, including those adopted at the global level to adjust the terms of trade between agriculture and other sectors, rural and urban zones and, in particular, North and South.

58. Over a number of decades FAO had provided advisory services and technical assistance designed to enhance agriculture and rural development in arid, semi-arid and sub-humid areas affected by desertification and drought. In the light of experience gathered in the field and the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), FAO had recently embarked upon a process of reassessing its policies and restructuring its programmes, and its policy-making bodies had defined the principles and guidelines of a framework international cooperation programme for agriculture and sustainable rural development tailored to the priority needs of arid, semi-arid and sub-humid regions affected by desertification and drought. The three basic strategic elements of the programme for the development of those zones were: greater efficiency in the utilization of the limited resources at their disposal; a reduction of the risk of, and vulnerability to, unpredictable climatic events and other natural disasters and the conservation of natural resources and protection of the environment. The programme components envisaged four levels of action: (i) a re-evaluation of agricultural and rural development plans and policies, bearing in mind the needs of the population and the production capacity of natural resources in the context of structural adjustment; (ii) the preparation of subsectoral plans and programmes in three basic subsectors: food security, forestry and fisheries; (iii) popular participation and the development of human resources in the context of rural development; and (iv) the transformation of production systems, making them economically, environmentally and socially sustainable so as to diversify products and sources of revenue. Activities by FAO in those four areas were supported by 12 special programmes of action which included special projects relating to the provision of services and technical support for the utilization of natural resources and the rational use of fertilizers, the fight against infestations and the supply of energy in rural areas.

59. FAO was also participating very actively in the negotiating process for the elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa. Through its programmes and specialized technical and legal services and in cooperation with the other relevant organizations of the United Nations system, FAO was assisting in the search for an international consensus which would help mobilize the necessary resources to control drought and desertification. In that context, through its active participation in the meetings of the Negotiating Committee and the inter-agency meetings, FAO was placing its technical skills in the area of combating desertification and developing arid zones at the disposal of member countries and the secretariat of the International Negotiating Committee. He noted that three basic documents had been prepared for the Negotiating Committee, and that other technical and strategic documents, as well as a catalogue of FAO activities in the area of desertification, had been drawn up in response to the immediate needs relating

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to the preparation of the convention. FAO was providing support services through an interdepartmental working group on desertification and was collaborating with the secretariat of the Committee, at whose disposal it had placed the services of a legal specialist; it was also assisting with the process of reviewing and preparing comments on the documentation submitted to the Committee.

60. He recalled that the agricultural sector, one of the main driving forces of the economy of small island developing States, contributed to food security and to increased foreign currency inflows and was therefore of fundamental importance in attaining sustainable development, eradicating poverty and satisfying basic human needs. It was vital that the draft programme of action of the global conference on the sustainable development of small island developing States should give due importance to sustainable agricultural and rural development, particularly its economic, social and environmental aspects, as well as to issues related to appropriate technology, institution-building and popular participation, all of which were indispensable components of the balanced and sustainable development of small island developing States. FAO had made extensive contributions to the Conference secretariat and had attended two regional technical meetings held in Port Vila, Vanuatu, in June and in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, in July 1993, as well as the Preparatory Committee in New York. For the aforementioned reasons, FAO would continue to support the secretariat of the Conference and the Governments of small island developing States in preparing specific proposals for action which took into account the fundamental role played by agriculture, forestry and fisheries in achieving environmentally sound and sustainable development and in mobilizing the international donor community in support of sustainable agriculture and rural development.

61. Straddling and highly migratory fish stocks were distributed at different stages of their life cycle both in the exclusive economic zones of riparian States and in the high seas. If those species, which were of great commercial importance, were to be effectively conserved and managed, consistent measures must be adopted in their distribution zones, so as to ensure the rational harvesting and the harmonization of catch methods for each population. That required the coordination of activities at the international level and the responsible management of fisheries. In those cases where there was no technical information on a specific fish stock, there was a considerable degree of international agreement on the necessity for the implementation of a cautious exploitation model until further data was available on the impact which the fishing of that species had on the resource base. While the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea contained provisions on the exploitation of straddling and highly migratory fish stocks, as well as on the cooperation of States in the conservation and management of living resources in the high seas, no detailed information was given on the scope of such cooperation, which had rendered necessary an international agreement on measures which should be adopted in that regard. The need to achieve more effective conservation and management of straddling and highly migratory fish stocks had been accepted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and endorsed by the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session. To that end, the

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United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks had been convened. The conclusion of an international agreement on mechanisms for international cooperation, duties of the flag State, responsibility for compliance with the provisions by the port State and compatibility and coherence between national and international conservation measures for the same stock would constitute a major step forward and would make it possible to continue work on technical aspects of the elaboration of measures and policies designed to ensure sustainable use of resources.

62. FAO was drafting an international code of conduct for responsible fishing that would cover general principles and six thematic areas: fishing operations, research, management, aquaculture, trade and integrated management of coastal zones. One element of that code would be an agreement to promote the observance of measures to conserve and manage the resources of the high seas which the FAO General Conference would adopt by virtue of article XIV of its Basic Texts. The code would also give greater impetus to other initiatives to promote the rational and sustainable use of fisheries resources. The advances made so far at the two initial meetings of the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks were very encouraging. FAO would continue to contribute scientific and technical support during and after the Conference. Moreover, it would ensure that other initiatives took into consideration the discussions held during the Conference in order to guarantee that the code would be both comprehensive and compatible with the results of the Conference.

63. Mr. MANCZYK (Poland) said that his delegation shared the opinion that promoting the concept of sustainable development was one of the central challenges of current times. UNCED and the institutional arrangements resulting from it had provided the international community with a framework for a more stable, predictable and sustainable process of development. The task that remained was to ensure that action followed the agreements and recommendations reached at Rio de Janeiro. The participation at the ministerial level in the first substantive session of the Commission on Sustainable Development had testified to the strong political commitment and readiness of many Governments to give sustainable development a primary role in their development programmes. It would be appropriate, however, to secure the participation of Ministers responsible for portfolios other than the environment. The proposal made by the Nordic countries to devote the 1994 high-level segment to the discussion of the interrelationship between environment and economy deserved further consideration. Another important stimulus for the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development and other processes recommended by the Rio Conference had come from the Tokyo summit meeting of the seven major industrialized countries in June 1993. The agreement on a multi-year programme of work for the Commission was important, because it provided the possibility to assess the progress achieved in the implementation of Agenda 21 and to ensure an integrated approach to all of its environment and development components. The Commission should give greater attention in its programme of work to the question of lifestyles and consumption and production patterns that could not be sustained.

(Mr. Manczyk, Poland)

64. The strengthening of coordination among the relevant United Nations agencies was of the utmost importance in the process of implementing the decisions taken at UNCED. The interaction between the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the Commission were noteworthy as a positive example of how such a complex issue as trade and environment could be dealt with in an effective and mutually supportive way. Poland noted with satisfaction that the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development had initiated a process for the allocation of responsibilities among the organizations of the United Nations system, and shared the view of the Administrative Committee on Coordination that the system must achieve more effective coordination at the country and regional levels. It considered the decision of the Bureau of the Commission to hold back-to-back meetings of the two groups of experts timely and appropriate and that the arrangements for their first sessions should provide enough time for Governments and experts to arrive at those meetings well prepared. It noted with concern the slow progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 and believed that the lack of adequate financing was among the principal constraints. Thus, special attention must be given to the activities of the ad hoc working group on finance.

65. Mr. SAREER (Maldives) said that his country, a small island State threatened by the effects of environmental degradation, had high hopes for the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21, especially chapter 17 of the latter. It also attached the highest priority to the success of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small-Island Developing States. Maldives numbered among them, and like the others, it faced constraints in limited manpower, especially skilled workers, the large distances separating population centres, the high cost of infrastructure, current demographic trends and scarce availability of information on basic resources. In addition, there were external constraints such as world trade and price fluctuations, regional political instability, global climate change and sea-level rise. The last two phenomena were a cause of special concern to Maldives, a country situated on a low-lying coral atoll. Assessments of their potential impact required careful evaluation of many factors, such as the current resource base, the state of the environment, the population growth rate and development activities within the country, before considering policy and planning alternatives. Small island States such as Maldives did not possess the necessary resources.

66. The financing of Agenda 21 still remained an issue of major concern. As the President of Maldives had said at the Rio Summit, although the estimated cost of over $600 million per year for the implementation of Agenda 21 could appear enormous, the cost to Maldives for construction of sea defences for only 50 of the 200 inhabited islands would reach an estimated $1.5 billion. He had added that, if the international community could spend an estimated $1 trillion annually on global defence, surely it must be possible to mobilize resources for more constructive purposes. In the case of small island developing States, national strategies must be combined with international action to promote sustained and environmentally sound development in those countries.

(Mr. Sareer, Maldives)

67. His delegation welcomed the efforts made in observance of General Assembly resolution 47/189, in particular the work of the Preparatory Committee, which had been reflected in a draft programme of action. In view of the lack of time, however, a few major areas remained unaddressed. It joined other delegations which had requested the resumption of the first session of the Preparatory Committee to enable the Conference participants to be well prepared. His delegation considered that if the Conference adopted a programme of action, a corresponding follow-up mechanism must be established stipulating a periodic review of its implementation, in order to ensure that the goals and objectives of the Conference were realized. In the implementation stage, a major difficulty faced by small island States was the lack of an appropriate international institution to coordinate and mobilize effectively support for their needs. Therefore, it was essential to establish a secretariat within the United Nations for that purpose.

68. Mr. TOMASSON (Iceland), speaking on behalf of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, said that the success of the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development would depend not only on the Commission itself but also on each country's active implementation of the provisions of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). In the view of the Nordic countries, the objectives of the Conference obviously could not be attained unless all Governments adopted effective measures to resolve their respective environment and development problems. In that context, he stressed the central role of women in promoting sustainable development.

69. Financing the implementation of Agenda 21, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Framework Convention on Climate Change was a difficult task that called for a new and more effective approach to financing at the global, multilateral and bilateral level. It would be necessary to find innovative means of financing, such as recourse to non-governmental organizations and the private sector. The restructuring of the Global Environment Facility was an important step in that direction. More effective financing might also be obtained through increased cooperation between the private sectors of the industrialized and developing countries. In any case, the topic of innovative financing should receive particular attention, and advice should be sought from the High-level Advisory Board on Sustainable Development.

70. Because of the growing importance of developing and transferring environmentally sound technologies, legal measures and economic instruments in donor and recipient countries would have to be coordinated so as to encourage increased private-sector participation in the transfer of technology. There was an urgent need to improve the link between technology transfer and capacity-building in order to ensure more efficient operation and maintenance of environmentally sound technologies once they were transferred to developing countries and countries in transition. It was also important to promote increased South-South cooperation to improve the adaptation of imported technologies to the circumstances peculiar to each case and enhance the use and development of indigenous, local and traditional knowledge and techniques, which in many instances had proved more cost-effective and environmentally friendly. The Nordic countries hoped that all those problems would be seriously addressed

(Mr. Tomasson, Iceland)

in the upcoming meetings of various bodies in connection with the work programme of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

71. The relationship between trade, environment and development was another issue of global importance. Work in that area should be guided by the fundamental objectives of sustainable development, and one way to attain them was to make sure that trade and environmental policies were mutually supportive. To that end, the compatibility of trade and the environment should be made a priority area within the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in the neat future, for which purpose the Uruguay Round must be brought to a successful conclusion. Special attention should also be paid to the needs of developing countries and countries in transition. The work in that area initiated by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) should support the efforts within GATT and complement the work of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

72. In the view of the Nordic countries, fruitful international collaboration on the environment required solid regional and institutional support. Regional cooperation was essential for the development of effective action programmes in such areas as coastal-zone management, conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and fresh water resources, combating desertification, and developing and disseminating indigenous knowledge and techniques. Furthermore, such cooperation ensured the active participation of Governments and local populations. With respect to institutional support, the Nordic countries welcomed the stronger involvement of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) as the catalyst and coordinator for environmental issues. When financial resources were scarce, it was imperative to ensure that they were used for result-oriented projects and to minimize administrative costs. To that end, the United Nations system should avoid duplicating efforts and should take advantage of the experience and comparative advantages of the relevant agencies. That was why the Nordic countries, which welcomed the work of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development, would like to see all of the Member States maintain a consistent position in the various United Nations governing bodies when promoting the integration of environment and development goals.

73. The Nordic countries were encouraged by the progress achieved to date in implementing the results of UNCED, such as the positive decisions taken at the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, aimed at, inter alia, increasing regional cooperation on the establishment of conservation and management measures. In that connection, in May the UNEP Governing Council had accepted the generous offer of the United States to host an intergovernmental conference on the protection of the marine environment from land-based activities, to be held in the fall of 1995. The topic was of great importance, since most pollution of the marine environment was caused by land-based activities. To contribute to the rapid adoption of international measures to resolve that problem, his Government had offered to host, in the spring of 1995, the final preparatory meeting for that conference, in which the Nordic countries would play an active role.

(Mr. Tomasson, Iceland)

74. The Nordic countries were encouraged to see that implementation of the forest principles was well under way at the national and regional levels. Those principles represented an important step towards creating a global consensus on the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests. The negotiations on a convention to combat desertification had got off to a good start, although the complexity of the issue meant that further practical consideration would have to be given to the nature of the instrument. However, the Nordic countries were confident that the convention could be completed by June 1994. They were in the process of preparing for the first conference of the parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Framework Convention on Climate Change. That process necessarily included coordinating with the Global Environment Facility so that it could serve as the financial mechanism for the two conventions.

75. The outcome of the Rio Conference recognized that proper management of human settlements was a prerequisite to attaining the overall goals of human-centred development. The Nordic countries were pleased to note that preparations were well under way for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II).

76. Lastly, the Nordic countries wished to reiterate a concern which they had expressed on several occasions but which had not received sufficient attention: the possible detrimental effect of military activities on the environment. In recent years, they had received alarming reports from Eastern Europe and other regions about serious environmental degradation caused by military activities. Obviously, military activities should strictly respect the environmental standards prevailing in civilian society, which was why the Nordic countries welcomed the ongoing efforts to integrate environmental concerns into those activities. They also stressed the importance of undertaking a general study of that issue against the background of the recent decision taken by the UNEP Governing Council on the basis of the Agenda 21 chapter on hazardous waste.

77. Mr. DIALLO (Executive Secretary of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the Elaboration of an International Convention to Combat Desertification) said that the English-language draft of the negotiating text of the International Convention to Combat Desertification had already been circulated to delegations for transmission to their competent national authorities with a view to the Negotiating Committee's third session, which would be held in New York from 17 to 28 January 1994. He emphasized the need for Member States to contribute to the Special Voluntary Fund established to assist developing countries affected by desertification and drought, in particular the least developed countries, to participate fully and effectively in the negotiation process, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 47/188.

The meeting rose at 6.20 p.m.